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ABSTRACT

A group of thirty-eight business educators from throughout Virginia evaluated recruitment materials designed to attract both male and female secondary students to office occupations. The materials were evaluated in reference to three factors: appropriateness for intended audience, accuracy and appearance, and sex stereotyping. Evaluation scores of the participants for each factor were correlated with their scores on the Sex-Role Attitude Instrument. The scale provides a measure of the individual's sex-role attitude on a continuum from traditional to non-traditional. Outcomes of the study indicate the business educators' acceptance of recruitment materials that emphasize the appeal of business and office occupations to both men and women and the broad scope of jobs available. In addition, the outcomes indicate the relationship that exists between the sex-role attitudes of business educators and their perceptions of the recruitment materials that depicted business and office occupations in a non-traditional way. (LRA)

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Sex-Role Attitudes of Business Educators and Their Perceptions of Office Education Recruitment Materials

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INTRODUCTION

In just about every publication one reads today, an article appears on the rapid advances being made in information processing technology and the need for individuals with information processing skills. Since the basic function of the office is the processing of information, the new technology will have a profound impact on business educators. Business educators, such as Adams and Lamb (1980), naturally ask: "Is Our Curriculum Attuned to Preparing Office Workers for the Eighties?" Even if this question can be answered affirmatively, we still face the problem of first recruiting students for our offerings.

The recruitment of students involves three major concerns for business educators: (1) To what extent are office workers needed?, (2) What is the appropriate image of the office worker of the future?, and (3) How will that image be related to prospective students? The tremendous need for office workers is well substantiated and certainly reinforces the need for the active recruitment of students for business education offerings. In fact, the Bureau of Labor Statistics in preparing information for the 1980-81 Occupational Outlook Handbook has projected a need between 1978 and 1990 for a total of 16.6 million clerical (office) workers, 4.8 million new workers and 11.8 million replacement workers. As a further indication of the need for office workers, John Naisbitt (1980), Senior Vice President of Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, publishers of the Trend Report, notes that the United States has already moved from an industrial society to an information processing society with over 55 percent of the work force involved in information processing. Business educators face a monumental

task in recruiting and preparing any where near the number of individuals needed for office work.

A major obstacle in the recruitment of students to occupational offerings has been the image many business educators have of office occupations. The numerous career opportunities in business and office occupations, such as those suggested by Schmidt (1980), are rarely made known to students. Business teachers have not been concerned about career ladders in reprographics, micrographics, data processing, and word processing systems of the administrative services division, or office work force, of an organization. Emphasis in the business education curriculum continues to be on preparation for the clerk-typist, stenographer, secretary hierarchy or the accounting clerk, bookkeeper, accountant hierarachy. Yet, these career paths are rarely valid for today's office workers. Few business people can even distinguish between the duties of a stenographer and secretary or between those of an accounting clerk and bookkeeper.

A recent position statement prepared by the Joint Committee of the National Business Education Association and the Business and Office Education Division of the American Vocational Association (1980) also addresses concerns about the appropriate portrayal of business education offerings and the recruitment of students. The statement, "Business Education: Its Status, Its Potential, and Its Needs in the 1980's" emphasizes the broad scope of office occupations available and the need to prepare individuals for these occupations.

In response to this need, the Office of Sex Equity for Vocational Education, Virginia Department of Education, funded a project aimed at

helping business educators meet the challenge of accurately portraying office occupations and at helping them recruit both male and female students to business offerings. The materials developed through the project and made available to Virginia business educators include a slide-tape presentation and an accompanying guide. The guide contains sample fact sheets, student handouts, and newspaper and radio releases along with suggestions for the use of each. The materials are aimed at middle-, junior, and senior-high school students. The materials can also be used to explain opportunities in business and office occupations to guidance, faculty, administrative, parent, advisory, and community groups. Emphasis in the materials is on the appeal of business and office occupations to both men and women, the broad scope of jobs available, and the advantages of the work.

This study was completed as part of the project. Its purpose was to investigate the relationship that exists between the sex-role attitudes of business educators and their perceptions of the recruitment materials. The relationship was examined for three categories or characteristics of the materials: (1) accuracy and appearance of the materials, (2) appropriateness of the materials for the intended audience, and (3) sex-stereotyping in the materials. The purpose of the study was to determine if the sex-role attitudes of business educators influence their perceptions of business and office education recruitment materials.

PROCEDURES

A group of 38 business educators selected from throughout Virginia met at the Annual Virginia Business Education Conference in August 1980 to eval-

uate the recruitment materials. Although the members of the group were not randomly selected, they were representative of business education teachers and supervisors in Virginia. The group viewed the slide-tape presentation, examined the guide, and completed two instruments: the Osmond and Martin (1975) Sex-Role Attitude Instrument and the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument prepared by the researcher.

The Sex-Role Attitude Instrument contains 32 items and provided a measure of the respondents' sex-role attitudes on a continuum from traditional to non-traditional. Responses to each item on the instrument were made on a five-point scale indicating level of respondent agreement, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The instrument includes 14 reverse items to avoid incidences of responses being influenced by overall response set. The higher the individual's score on the instrument, the lower the extent of stereotype in the individual's attitude.

The Perception of Recruitment Materials Instrument contains 15 items, 5 in each of the categories previously noted. Eleven of the items were positive statements about the materials, and 4 were negative statements. Responses to each of the items were made on a five-point scale indicating level of respondent agreement from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Reverse scoring procedures were used for the negative items. Thus, the higher the individual's score, the more positively the individual reacted to the materials.

Prior to viewing the slide-tape presentation and examining the guide, the group responded to the Sex-Role Attitude Instrument. After completing these activities, the group responded to the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument.

RESULTS

The mean response levels for each item on the Sex-Role Attitude Instrument are reported in Table 1, page 6. Since the mean response levels on 17 of the 32 items were 4.00 or above, the respondents tended overall to score at the higher end of the five-point scale for each item. Only 3 items had mean response levels below 3.00. The mean response levels ranged from 2.79 on Item 15 to 4.79 on Item 10.

Descriptive statistics for the Sex-Role Attitude Instrument are provided in Table 2, page 8. The mean score of 123.97 with a standard deviation of 12.958 indicates that the scores were well dispersed; they ranged from 97-152 with a standard error of measurement of 4.86. The reliability coefficient (KR 20) of 0.860 further indicates a substantial degree of internal consistency for each individual's responses to the instrument.

The mean response levels for the 15 items on the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument are presented in Table 3, page 9. Overall, the materials were very well received by the group with 9 of the items having ratings of over 4.0. These ratings reflect the groups agreement with the positive items and disagreement with the negative items. For the accuracy and appearance items, the negative item about the appearance of the materials had a rating of 3.35. For the sex-stereotyping items, the one about whether the materials will help eliminate sex-stereotyping had a rating of 3.26. Comments solicited from the group pointed out a need to change some of the pictures in the slide-tape presentation to show more up-to-date equipment and to show more males operating equipment.

Descriptive statistics for the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument, shown in Table 2, page 8, include a mean score of 59.95 with

Table 1. Sex-Role Attitude Instument Responses

	Item	N	Mean Response Level
*1.	Whoever is the better wage-earner, wife or husband, should be the breadwinner.	38	2.87
2.	Women with children in grammar school should, if at all possible, stay at home rather than work.	38	3.32
*3.	Men need liberation equally as much as do women.	38	3.76
4.	The way men and women behave is more a result of their genetic make-up than of the way they are brought up.	37	4.30
5.	Child-rearing methods should be different for children of different sex.	38	3.71
*6.	There should be low-cost, high quality child-care centers for working women.	38	4.13
7.	To a great extent, women are less able to make a career commitment than are men.	38	3.24
*8.	Women can attain true equality in this country only through a really drastic change in the social structure.	38	3.16
*9.	Women should have equal job opportunities with men.	38	4.63
*10.	Women should get equal pay with men for doing the same jobs.	38	4.79
*11.	Men should take the same amount of responsibility as women in caring for home and children.	38	4.26
12.	A husband who is the breadwinner in the family should make all the important decisions.	38	4.50
13.	A man's self-esteem is severely injured if his wife makes more money than he does.	38	3.00
14.	There is considerable evidence that men, in general, are a "superior species" to women.	38	4.39
15.	Women with preschool children should not work outside their homes if at all possible.	38	2.79
*16.	Men's clubs and lodges should be required to admit women.	38	2.68

Table 1. Sex-Role Attitude Instrument Responses (Continued)

	Item	N	Mean Response Level
*17.	Men should have more freedom to do such things as cook and care for the children, if they so desire.	38	4.39
18.	Either consciously or unconsciously, most women would like to be men.	38	4.45
*19.	Unlike the race riots, the "battle between the sexes" will never involve violence on any large scale.	38	3.79
20.	It is possible for women to satisfy their needs for achievement through their husbands.	38	3.53
21.	Men are more capable of assuming leadership than are women.	38	4.05
22.	Women are less capable of making important decisions than are men.	38	4.26
*23.	The Equal Rights Amendment related to sex should be ratified as soon as possible.	38	3.13
24.	Females should go ahead and pamper males--"Tell him how great he is"--because that is a useful way to get what they want.	38	4.03
25.	Career women generally are neurotic.	38	4.58
26.	Since men have a natural urge to dominate and lead, women who challenge this actually threaten the welfare of society.	38	4.00
27.	Women generally prefer light conversations over rational discussions.	38	3.87
*28.	Men should stop appraising women solely on the basis of appearance and sex appeal.	38	4.21
29.	I would feel uncomfortable if my immediate supervisor at work was a woman.	38	4.37
*30.	Females should be encouraged to plan for a career, not just a job.	37	4.68
*31.	I would vote for a woman for President of the United States.	37	3.54
32.	Women really like being dependent on men.	37	3.65

*Reverse items

Table 2.--Descriptive Statistics for Responses of Participants to the Two Instruments

Instrument	Mean	Standard Deviation	Reliability	Standard Error of Measurement
Sex-Role Attitude	123.97	12.958	0.860	4.86
Perceptions of Recruitment Materials	59.95	5.409	0.809	2.37
Five Accuracy and Appearance Items	19.74	2.048	0.610	1.28
Five Appropriate for Audience Items	20.76	2.083	0.680	1.18
Five Sex-stereotyping Items	19.45	2.673	0.712	1.43

Table 3. Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument Responses

Item	N	Mean Response Level
Accuracy and Appearance Items:		
The recruitment materials are attractive and appealing.	38	4.11
Accurate information is given in the material.	38	4.08
I am proud to be associated with the image of my profession that the materials present.	38	4.32
*The information presented does not accurately reflect the field of study.	38	3.87
*The appearance of the materials needs improvement.	37	3.35
Intended Audience Items:		
Secondary students are an appropriate audience for the information.	38	4.08
I would use the recruitment materials in my school.	38	4.34
The concept of the area of study provided in the materials is one I agree with.	38	4.16
The materials would be equally effective in any locality.	38	3.95
*The materials are not appropriate for teenage viewers.	38	4.24
Sex-Stereotyping Items:		
The material will help eliminate sex-stereotyping.	38	3.26
Young men and young women are treated equally in the materials.	38	3.87
These materials can help both young men and young women learn of occupational opportunities.	38	4.26
The materials show the area of study as suitable for both men and women.	38	4.08
*The materials show evidence of sex-stereotyping.	38	3.97

*Negative or reverse items.

a standard deviation of 5.409. The scores, even though they tended toward one end of the scale, were adequately dispersed. They ranged from 51-72 with a standard error of measurement of 2.37. The overall reliability coefficient (KR 20) for the instrument was 0.809 and for the three types of items on the instrument the reliability coefficients were 0.610, 0.680, and 0.712. These coefficients for the three different types of items were obtained to determine if the respondents would react differently to any category of items, particularly the sex-stereotyping items. The reliability coefficients were, however, substantial for the overall instrument as well as for the three types of items on the instrument.

Correlations between the Sex-Role Attitude Instrument scores and the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument scores appear in Table 4, page 11. As the correlation value of 0.0150 indicates, no correlation exists between the respondents' total scores on the two instruments. Further, the correlation values of 0.0622, 0.0719, and -0.0734 reveal that no correlations exist between the Sex-Role Attitude Instrument scores and the respondents' scores on the three types of items on the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions are based on the results of this study:

1. The respondent group, 38 business educators selected from throughout Virginia, had a sex-role attitude scores that spread over a continuum from traditional to non-traditional with a tendency toward the non-traditional end of the scale.

2. The respondent group was receptive to the recruitment materials that emphasized the appeal of business and office occupations to both men and women, the broad scope of jobs available, and the advantages of the work. Nine items on the 15-item Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument had ratings on a five-point scale above 4.00 and only two items had ratings below 3.87.

Table 4.--Correlations of Responses to the Sex-Role Attitude Instrument and to the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument

Items on the Perceptions of Recruitment Materials Instrument	Correlation with Sex-Role Attitude Instrument
All Fifteen Items	0.0150
Five Accuracy and Appearance Items	0.0622
Five Intended Audience Items	0.0719
Five Sex-Stereotyping Items	-0.0734

3. No relationship existed between the respondents' sex-role attitude scores and their perceptions of the recruitment materials. Thus even though some respondents held traditional sex-role attitudes, their attitudes did not influence their perceptions of the recruitment materials which depicted business and office occupations in a non-traditional way.

The above conclusions indicate that business educators, regardless of their sex-role attitudes, are ready to accept the broadened concept of business and office occupations advocated by the Joint Committee of the National Business Education Association and the Business and Office Education Division of the American Vocational Association (1980). However, due to the limited scope of this study, further research should be undertaken to substantiate the findings of this study. Other states and groups need to become involved in the preparation of recruitment materials that will attract students to a wide variety of business and office occupations and to examine business educators perceptions of the materials.

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